

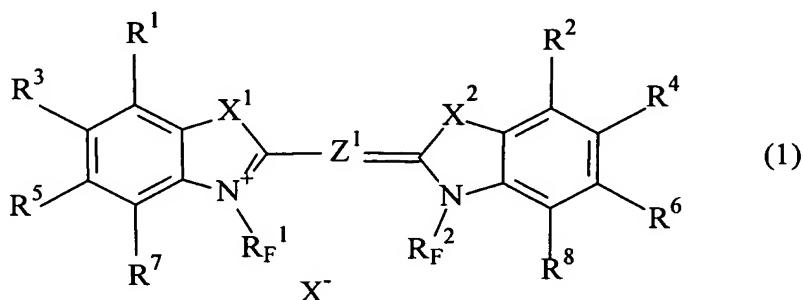
**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:**

*This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:*

**LISTING OF THE CLAIMS:**

Claims 1-24 (Canceled)

Claim 25 (Currently Amended): An infrared absorber ~~according to claim 24,~~ comprising, in a molecule thereof, a fluorine-containing substituent which has at least 5 fluorine atoms, wherein said infrared absorber is represented by general formula (1) as follows:



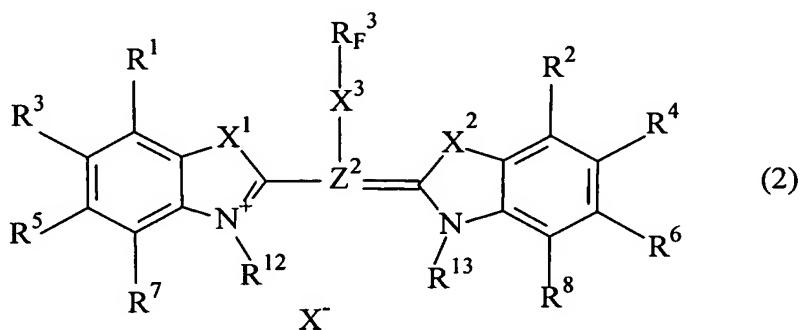
in which formula: each of R<sub>F</sub><sup>1</sup> and R<sub>F</sub><sup>2</sup> independently represents a fluorine-containing substituent having at least 5 fluorine atoms; each of X<sup>1</sup> and X<sup>2</sup> independently represents -CR<sup>9</sup>R<sup>10</sup>-, -S-, -Se-, -NR<sup>11</sup>-, -CH=CH- or -O-; R<sup>1</sup> to R<sup>8</sup> each independently represents a hydrogen atom, alkyl group, alkoxy group or halogen atom; R<sup>1</sup> to R<sup>8</sup> may represent a plurality of atoms such that at least one of pairs R<sup>1</sup> and R<sup>3</sup>, R<sup>2</sup> and R<sup>4</sup>, R<sup>5</sup> and R<sup>7</sup>, R<sup>6</sup> and R<sup>8</sup>, R<sup>1</sup> and X<sup>1</sup>, and R<sup>2</sup> and X<sup>2</sup> can be mutually connectable to form an aliphatic 5-membered ring or 6-membered ring, an aromatic 6-membered ring or a substituted aromatic 6-membered ring;

$R^9$  and  $R^{10}$  each independently represents an alkyl group, or represent  $=CH-$  which are combined to form a ring;  $R^{11}$  represents an alkyl group;

$Z^1$  represents a heptamethine group, which may have one or more substituents selected from the group consisting of alkyl groups, halogen atoms, amino groups, arylthio groups, alkylthio groups, aryloxy groups, alkoxy groups, barbituric groups and thiobarbituric groups, and which may include a cyclohexene or cyclopentene ring formed by mutually bonding substituents on two methine carbons of the heptamethine group, which ring may further have a substituent selected from the group consisting of alkyl groups and halogen atoms; and

$X^-$  represents a counter ion required for neutralizing an electric charge.

Claim 26 (Currently Amended): An infrared absorber ~~according to claim 24, comprising, in a molecule thereof, a fluorine-containing substituent which has at least 5 fluorine atoms~~, wherein said infrared absorber is represented by general formula (2) as follows:



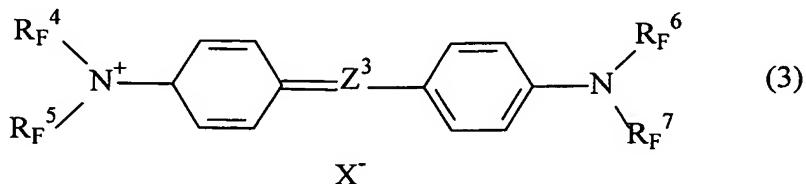
in which formula:  $R_F^3$  represents a fluorine-containing substituent having at least 5 fluorine atoms;  $X^3$  represents  $-NH-$ ,  $-O-$  or  $-S-$ ; each of  $R^{12}$  and  $R^{13}$  independently represents an alkyl group;

each of  $X^1$  and  $X^2$  independently represents  $-CR^9R^{10}-$ ,  $-S-$ ,  $-Se-$ ,  $-NR^{11}-$ ,  $-CH=CH-$  or  $-O-$ ;  $R^1$  to  $R^8$  each independently represents a hydrogen atom, alkyl group, alkoxy group or halogen atom;  $R^1$  to  $R^8$  may represent a plurality of atoms such that at least one of pairs  $R^1$  and  $R^3$ ,  $R^2$  and  $R^4$ ,  $R^5$  and  $R^7$ ,  $R^6$  and  $R^8$ ,  $R^1$  and  $X^1$ , and  $R^2$  and  $X^2$  can be mutually connectable to form an aliphatic 5-membered ring or 6-membered ring, an aromatic 6-membered ring or a substituted aromatic 6-membered ring;

$R^9$  and  $R^{10}$  each independently represents an alkyl group, or represent  $=CH-$  which are combined to form a ring;  $R^{11}$  represents an alkyl group;

$X^-$  represents a counter ion required for neutralizing an electric charge; and  $Z^2$  represents a polymethine chain of at least 5 carbon atoms.

Claim 27 (Currently Amended): An infrared absorber ~~according to claim 24, comprising, in a molecule thereof, a fluorine-containing substituent which has at least 5 fluorine atoms~~, wherein said infrared absorber is represented by general formula (3) as follows:



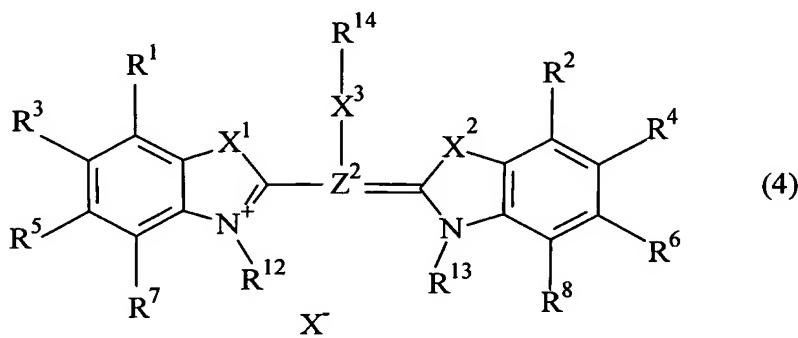
in which formula: each of  $R_F^4$ ,  $R_F^5$ ,  $R_F^6$  and  $R_F^7$  independently represents a fluorine-containing substituent having at least 5 fluorine atoms or an alkyl group, and at least one of  $R_F^4$ ,  $R_F^5$ ,  $R_F^6$  and  $R_F^7$  represents a fluorine-containing substituent having at least 5 fluorine atoms;  $Z^3$  represents a pentamethine group, which may have a substituent selected from the group consisting of halogen atoms, hydroxyl groups, alkyl groups optionally having a further

substituent, aryl groups optionally having a further substituent and heterocyclic groups, and which may also contain a cyclohexene or cyclopentene ring formed by mutually bonding substituents on two methine carbons of the pentamethine group, which ring may further have a substituent selected from the group consisting of alkyl groups and halogen atoms; and

X<sup>-</sup> represents a counter ion required for neutralizing an electric charge.

Claim 28 (Original): An infrared absorber comprising a polymethine chain of at least 5 carbon atoms and an alkyl group of at least 8 carbon atoms, said alkyl group being connected to the polymethine chain via any of nitrogen, oxygen and sulfur.

Claim 29 (Previously Presented): An infrared absorber according to claim 28 wherein said infrared absorber is represented by general formula (4) as follows:



in which formula: R<sup>14</sup> represents an alkyl group of at least 8 carbon atoms; X<sup>3</sup> represents -NH-, -O- or -S-; each of R<sup>12</sup> and R<sup>13</sup> independently represents an alkyl group; each of X<sup>1</sup> and X<sup>2</sup> independently represents -CR<sup>9</sup>R<sup>10</sup>-, -S-, -Se-, -NR<sup>11</sup>-, -CH=CH- or -O-; R<sup>1</sup> to R<sup>8</sup> each independently represents a hydrogen atom, alkyl group, alkoxy group or halogen atom; R<sup>1</sup> to R<sup>8</sup> may represent a plurality of atoms such that at least one of pairs R<sup>1</sup> and R<sup>3</sup>, R<sup>2</sup> and R<sup>4</sup>, R<sup>5</sup> and R<sup>7</sup>, R<sup>6</sup> and R<sup>8</sup>, R<sup>1</sup> and X<sup>1</sup>, and R<sup>2</sup> and X<sup>2</sup> can be mutually

connectable to form an aliphatic 5-membered ring or 6-membered ring, an aromatic 6-membered ring or a substituted aromatic 6-membered ring;

$R^9$  and  $R^{10}$  each independently represents an alkyl group, or represent  $=CH-$  which are combined to form a ring;  $R^{11}$  represents an alkyl group;

$X^-$  represents a counter ion required for neutralizing an electric charge; and

$Z^2$  represents a polymethine chain of at least 5 carbon atoms.

Claim 30 (Canceled)